Contents

1 Themes and aims of the dissertation

The main reason for undertaking the study presented here is to gain insights into the process of teacher development. Adopting a case study approach enables the study to focus on an individual teacher working in tertiary teacher training over a perod of three and a half years. Using a particular form of practioner research, exploratory practice (Allwright and Hanks, 2009), means that the teacher conducting the research could collect data in a familiar setting with participants known to him. This is the process referred to by Freeman (1998) of 'melding the work of the teacher and that of the researcher' (p.5). Focusing on the author's own move into a new area of classroom practice, that of becoming a teacher trainer, the final outcome of the research aims to reach an understanding of what the transition or 'the "shift" from teacher to teacher educator' means for the author's personal teacher development (Matei, Bernaus, Heyworth, Pohl and Wright, 2007, p.5).

Nevertheless, such a focus alone would be too narrow and limiting. Three further rationales for the study emerged during the initial stages of the research. Firstly, in seeking to understand the transition from teacher to teacher trainer, I found myself better able to understand the situation of the trainee teachers with whom I was working, that is the notion of 'the teacher as learner' (Lamb and Simpson, 2003, p.56). Additionally, sharing findings with the wider professional community could prove helpful to teachers who might find themselves in a similar situation given that teacher development activities can act 'as potentially knowledge generating for the wider educational community' (Fraser, Kennedy, Reid and McKinney, 2007, p.161). The third element was to validate the case study approach as one way for practising teachers to conduct their own professional development in their own environments (Simons, 2009). These are illustraed below:

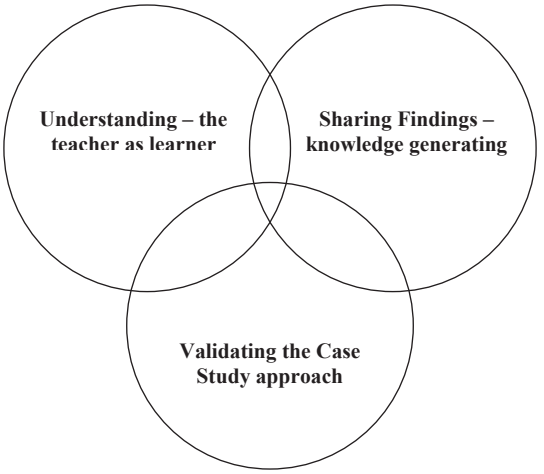

Figure 1 Three ways of examining teacher development

2 Overview of the dissertation

The dissertation is divided into ten chapters. Following the introductory chapter, **Chapter 2** presents a chronolgy of the author's teaching to reveal the background to the study and the influences exerted upon it. **Chapter 3** then provides an overview of teacher development, discussing training in the process, along with addressing some of the wider concerns of education. Next, **Chapter 4** addresses the research design and method of the study as well as introducing the four research questions. It also provides further information on the research instruments and data sources, as well as introducing the study's most important participants, the trainee teachers. It also discusses a number of important methodological considerations. In **Chapter 5** preliminary research and the pilot study are discussed. **Chapters 6** to **9** provide the results and discussion of each of the four research questions. **Chapter 10** concludes the dissertation, discusses the implications for teacher training, including a number of limitations, and ends by proposing areas for further research.

3 Theoretical background

There are a variety of ways to develop as a teacher: Four are discussed here under the rubric of language classroom research; action research; collaborative or cooperative development; reflective practice; and exploratory practice. However, before considering each in turn, brief consideration is given to the broad field of teacher development. The debate on whether development is distinct from training will not be entered into here. It is assummed that training and development form a continuum (Ur, 1998) as illustrated below:

Figure 2 The training – development continuum

Whether the situation is to be bemoaned or not, the teacher's lot is a lonely one (Bailey, Curtis and Nunan, 2001) because once a classroom door is shut behind the teacher, they are very much on their own. The role and responsibility of classroom teachers can neither be removed nor abdicated without obviously and radically altering the reality of the classroom. Therefore, teacher development is discussed here as a valuable way of ensuring that classroom teachers have the means at their disposal to contemplate, reflect upon, understand and, where need be, change their practice for to their own benefit and that of their students.

For Cohen, Manion and Morrison (1996) 'education is… problematic and not susceptible to simple recipes for success' (p. 37). It therefore becomes incumbent upon students teachers, and I would contend, both 'recently and distantly qualified teachers' (p. 28) 'to nurture their own development …constantly aware of the shifting currents of debate and practice, and becoming increasingly able to exercise autonomy, collegiality and professional judgement' (p. 37). Referring to conditions in the United Kingdom, Nicholls and Jarvis (2002) found a 'rhetoric that teaching and research are of equal importance' (p. 1). At the same time, the British context reflects a heightened acceptance by large swathes of society of the socio-economic swing towards consumerism and entrepreneurism. As White, Hockley, van der Horst Jansen and Laughner (2008) point out when discussing the management of English language teaching operations throughout the world, there is now 'a focus on quality,

efficiency, improved productivity, self-management, accountability to stakeholders and an emphasis on service' (p.5) which is all pervasive. It 'is a feature of managerialism… in which codes of practice and the interests of the client are prioritized' (p.5). Whilst this reflects the pressures facing the teaching profession at all levels in Britain, its effect is already being felt in the Hungarian teaching context. One consequence is the increased use of teacher development as a means of ensuring quality control. However, the teacher development discussed here has been undertaken voluntarily by the author rather than being imposed by an external body.

Teachers development can take various forms, and Richards, Platt and Platt (1992) offer an extensive definition of such, as does Thornbury (2006). However, for present purposes the choice was made to research my own classroom. According to Allwright and Bailey (1991), language classroom research or '[c]lassroom-centred research is just what it says it is – research *centred* on the classroom' (p.2, italics in the original). Language classroom research therefore offers the teacher a variety of choices, for example to effect short-term changes by means of action research or encourage teachers to work together as in collaborative or cooperative development. Yet, such research can also encourage teachers to reflect upon their work, that is engage in reflective practice, or seek an understanding of what they do, that is exploratory practice. According to Chaudron (2000) teaching practitioners who have adopted language classroom research have 'dramatically expanded the scope of their research to address critical areas of practice…' (p. 1).

For this research teacher development is synonymous with neither action research nor collaborative development. The former is acknowledged as one type of teacher development, albeit an influential one (Allwright and Bailey, 1991, Chaudron, 2000 and Wallace, 1998), which exemplifies an approach to solving immediate clasroom problems and gauging their effect; collaborative or cooperative development meanwhile emphasises collaborative and/or cooperative ventures between and amongst classroom teachers (Edge, 1992a and Burns, 1999). However, echoing Edge (1992b) and Gebhard and Oprandy (1999), Field (1997) warns that '[c]lassroom research in ELT [English Language Teaching] is not a hobby: it is a professional imperative' (p.192). Moreover, it is only by undertaking classroom research that teachers will be able to extend their knowledge of the impact of their teaching on the learning processes of their students. In examining our everyday practice we may have findings of general application or specific to a particular course, group or individual. However, instead of merely extending one's knowledge of the impact one has in the classroom, that is reflective practice, one may need to decide that more signifcant long-term change needs to follow a more profound understanding of the situation won via the exploratory practice approach.

For Allwright (1999) contemplation (reflective practice), as opposed to just taking action (action research or collaborative/cooperative development), may lead to an understanding of a situation (p.4). However, understanding won by extended contemplation of a situation and exploring alternatives over a longer time can serve to effect deeper and more serious change which contemplation alone may not yield, this is action for understanding (pp.4–5), or ultimately, exploratory practice (Allwright, 2003). Importantly, while such understanding and exploration may indicate the necessity of making changes, they may, conversely, dictate that no change is necessary (p.5). It is this notion of understanding, exemplified by the concept of exploratory practice (Allwright and Hanks, 2009) that underpins the dissertaion: seeking to understand my own practice was the initial impetus for the research. Moreover, deciding to embark upon such a classroom research project as a form of teacher development mitigates the sense of disempowerment referred to by Bowen and Marks (1994) and already described by White *et al.* (2008). As argued by Head and Taylor (1997) 'teachers need to convince both themselves and others that they are doing a job which is valued, and that they can take control of the direction of their own development' (p.8).

The concerns of trainee teachers as discussed by Cohen *et al.* (1996) reveal a sequence of competencies to be developed during initial teacher traing programmes (p.21-22). What this sequence demonstrates is that for newly qualified teachers the pressing concerns are related to classroom survival techniques, not to their own development. Discipline, for example, is a significant element for all new teachers regardless of whether discipline is in fact a real concern in their classrooms. The sequence depicted below reveals a progression from more pressing concerns to areas of teaching competence that require more reflection and consideration 'of the extended professional' (p.26) and demonstrates how teachers can move from primary concerns such as discipline, to such phases when they become, for instance, more aware of their pupils as individuals, and so become responsibile for curricular planning or working on assessment procedures, to a time when they are more able to take stock of their own practice and contemplate their own professional development. Ironically, while such systems of initial preparation as described emphasise that professional development begins 'from the point of entry to the course' (p.28), this sequence reveals that professional development 'may not be uppermost in the mind of the novice student teacher' (p.28) as is indeed proven by my own research discussed below. However, such a neat progression presupposes a uniformity of wants, needs and experience amongst trainees which does not accord with reality. Its linearity also fails to provide any feedback and linkage with previous experience and is limited in terms of its consideration of only six areas of teacher competence.

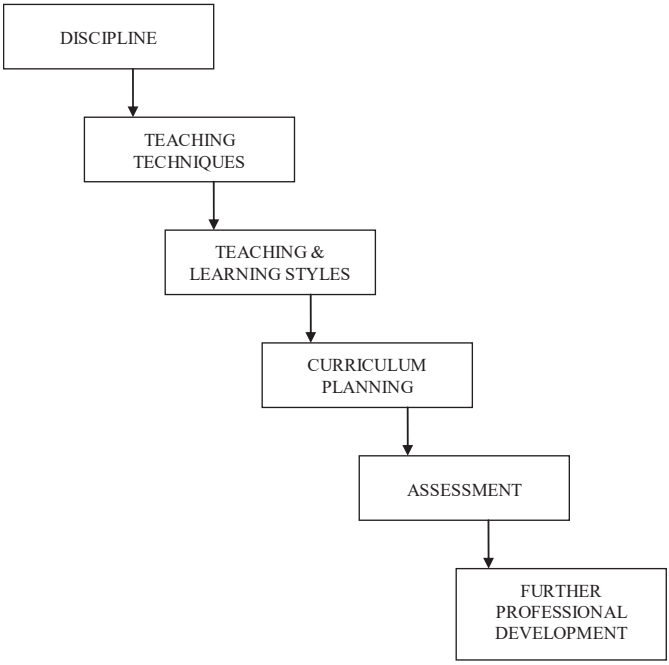

Figure 3 A sequence for developing competences

A more suitable approach would be that of Grenfell (1998) which although advocating the 'triangle of training' (p.37) has clear relevance to teacher development. This has 'craft knowledge' at its apex, a fusion of 'the development practice and tacit knowledge *in situ*', 'personal (fundamental) educational theory' won via reflective practice at the bottom right-hand corner, and, most importantly for present purposes, 'educational (theory) principles' acquired as a result of teacher training at the bottom left-hand corner. This model thus clearly advocates the worth of formal training whilst giving equal credit to the knowledge and experience won by teachers, whether novice or more experienced, in the course of their practice or while reflecting on that practice. Such a model offers visible integration of elements involved in the development, or here training, of teachers and, as above, can apply equally to the neophyte or old hand.

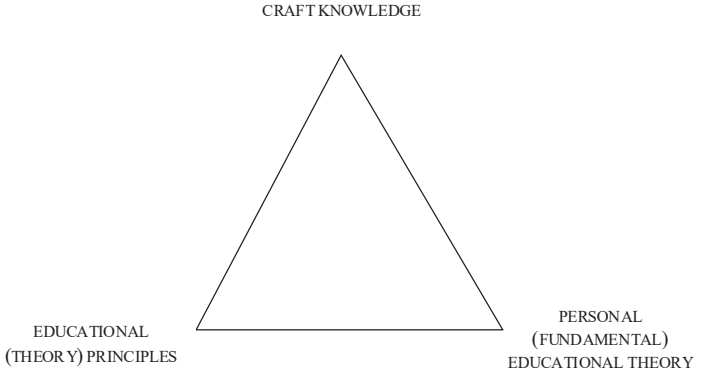

Figure 4 Grenfell's (1998) 'triangle of training'

This training model thus provides teaching experience and time for reflection and discussion as a means of building up both tacit and individual fundamental educational knowledge, but it is in supplying educational principles that the possibilities of explicit input of information is most apparent. As a result Grenfell's 'triangle of training' exemplifies the blurring of the distinction between training and development as already illustrated by *Figure 3* above.

However, while the two models described have a place for teachers to develop, they do not deal exclusively with teacher development. Once the teacher has passsed through initial training, there are, as above, various options. Gebhard (1996) offers teacher exploration, that is exploratory practice, presented as a four-stage integrated cycle which makes use of real-time samples of teaching from practising teachers in their own classrooms:

- collection of teaching samples;
- the analysis of these samples;
- the appraisal of the teaching in the samples;
- the decisions on any changes in teaching behaviour (p. 22).

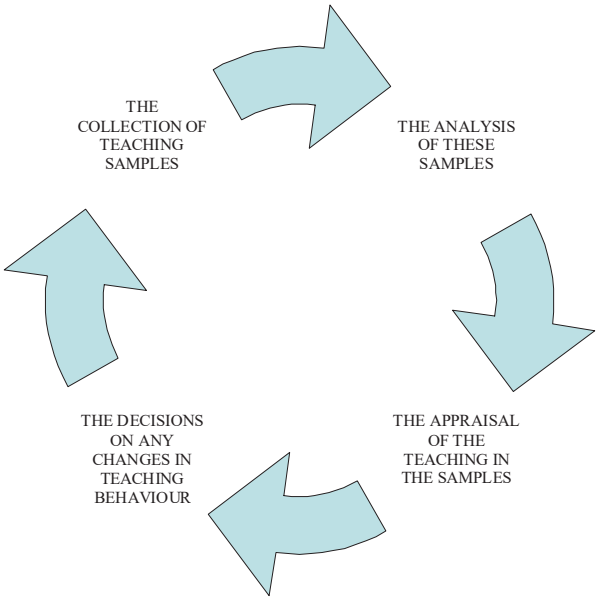

Figure 5 Gebhard's (1996) The four –stage cycle of exploratory practice

Using this cycle, teacher development activities can involve the likes of peer observation, writing a teaching diary or talking about teaching with other teachers. All these activities can be placed within the exploratory cycle depicted above and lend themselves to use by practising teachers.

In conclusion, teacher development is a long term, personal commitment to bringing about change. It can be engaged in using a variety of means, none of which can claim universal appropriacy and relevance. However, it would be wrong to necessarily equate change only to change in a concrete sense; change can also mean a change in one's understanding of a certain situation or coming to terms with a classroom phenomenon. Teacher development which makes use of exploratory practice can achieve such understanding by collecting data on the situation that is to be examined using research methods which are similar if not identical to everyday classroom activities, they are therefore considerably less intrusive and parasitic than other research methods. It is for this reason that exploratory practice was chosen as the means of collecting the data.

4 Research methods

Having decided to work within the qualitative research paradigm, the intention of the research methods section was to establish the credibility of the study; to this end, I endeavoured, after Holliday (2002), to use it as a means to 'show my workings' (p.23).

Chapter 4 of the dissertation reconsiders the research aims of the study before moving on to examine closely how the research was designed. The description of the research

methods aims to allow the reader to follow the methodological procedures used in order, if desired, to replicate the study. This includes details of the tools used as well as dwelling on significant methodological considerations pertinent to the research undertaking. An examination of the data collection procedures is provided, as is a detailed description of the data sources.

Research aims

The aim of the research was to chart the author's own development in terms of the progress from being a teacher to becoming a teacher trainer. In essence, by examining their own development teachers can, according to Underhill (1986), help themselves on the way to becoming the best possible teachers they can be.

The four **research questions** which drove the study forward are as follows:

1. How should the teacher trainer share their own teaching experience and expertise in the delivery of a methodology course?
2. Trainees on methodology courses often comment that they have no teaching experience. What does having 'no teaching experience' mean?
3. What is a teaching professional?
4. How can the course materials, in particular the readings, best be exploited for maximum comprehension and usefulness?

Research participants and setting

Since development can be characterised as a long-term undertaking, the case study approach and the resulting research methods examine a relatively long period of three and a half years between 2005 and 2008 with data won from 14 methodology classes covering the methodology of General English Language Teaching, Business English Teaching as well as Teaching English for Specific Purposes. The participants numbered approximately 240 trainee teachers of the Department of English Applied Linguistics (DEAL) in the School of English and American Studies within the Faculty of Arts of Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest.

Research design

Having defined what I understand by the term teacher development in Chapter 3 the research instruments were specifically chosen to enable me to be both a teacher and to research my own classrooms, examining my own practice, and thus my own development. Originally I envisaged using myself as the sole data source and via the use of triangulation lend the findings won from a number of data sources the expected degree of validity and veneer of credibility. This was naïve. In addition to data collected on and by me, data collected from other sources is of crucial importance. This importance lies not only with the concept of triangulation, but also with thick description and the various layers of meaning this entails (Holliday, 2002).

The literature on teacher research (Bailey *et al.,* 2001, Brown and Rodgers, 2002, Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000, Freeman, 1998, McDonough and McDonough, 1997,

Nunan, 1992, Robson, 1993 and Wallace 1998) describes a wide variety of data collection methods. The following sections will now describe the methods chosen more fully.

Data collection methods

McGrath (2006) proposes that the 'real test of a research method…is its fitness for purpose' (p. 171) and this section seeks to describe the principal data collection instruments and their suitability for the research. The tools are as follows:

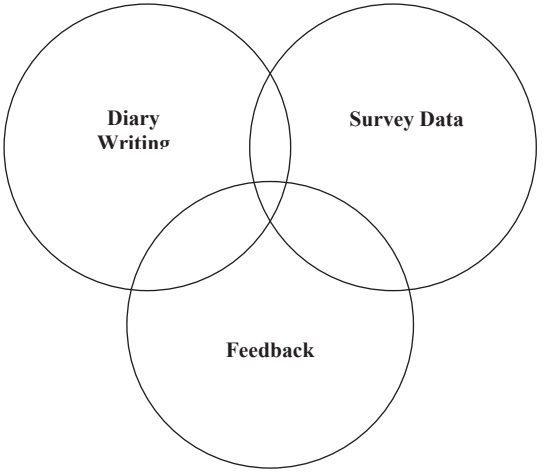

Figure 6 Research instruments

Diary writing as a research tool

For this study diaries are seen as 'a place to record our observations of what goes on in our own and other teachers' classrooms, write about our discussions, consider teaching ideas and reflect on our teaching' (Gebhard, 1996, p.36). A critical, non-judgmental distance to one's own practice can be achieved via constantly revisiting the themes, reworking, rethinking and reinterpreting in the light of further teaching in order to ascertain their relevance as research areas.

Diary writing is prone to two major limitations: 1) finding the time to write as soon as possible after the event, and 2) the need to write in a way which is not just descriptive, but also does not succumb to the dual temptations of overly praising or criticising one's own practice. Both these phenomena proved true for the research described. The time-to-write factor was solved by writing as soon as possible after the class taught. The second was overcome via the constant processes of reworking, rethininking and reinterpreting as described above.

Survey data

Surveys, or questionnaires, 'belong to a disparate assortment of data collection techniques under the rubric of *elicitation techniques*' and 'are extremely common in language teaching research' (Nunan and Bailey, 2009, p.124, italics in original). Accordingly, the 'overall purpose of a survey is to obtain a snapshot of conditions, attitudes, and/or events of an entire population at a single point in time by collecting data from a sample drawn from the population' (p. 125).

This is almost wholly true for this study, except in terms of the sample drawn from the population. The study did in fact aim to collect data from the entire population of trainee participants worked with, that is some 240 university students. However, given classroom exigencies this was not always possible and some participants for various reasons, did not or could not provide the data. Participation was voluntary, trainees were neither obliged to complete the survey questionnaire, nor were they penalised if they did not do so. The survey used in this study was a classroom administered survey using the four research questions given above. This survey was adminsitered to each of the 13 methodology seminars and to the participants in the methodology lecture. As with any data collection tool it was necessary to exercise a certain degree of caution (Dörnyei, 2003).

Feedback

Feedback can be an extremely important and useful source of information for the classroom practioner. As Foord (2009) states, '[y]ou spend a lot of time feeding your learners, you deserve the chance to get 'fed back' in return!' (p.37). Yet, as with any data collection instrument there are disadvantages: the main one of feedback is that of timing, 'it comes too late to be acted upon' (p.37).

The feedback considered here comes from the DEAL semester Feedback Form officially administered during a 10-15 minute slot on the last lesson of every semester. The feedback form is a confidential document handed out by the class teacher but completed by the students and returned to the departmental office by one of their group. All the sheets are seen initially by the head of department who collates the information and presents it at a departmental meeting soon afterwards. Only then can the teachers view the data and use it as they see fit.

Despite an initially sceptical view of such feedback, seeing it as serving no real purpose because the group I had taught would never be assembled again, I gradually altered my perception. Collecting and analysing the feedback over time, rethinking and reinterpreting in a way similar to the diary data, it was possible to discern patterns within and between groups. Examining the data from the 14 methodology classes enabled me to identify and follow themes relevant to the research questions given above.

In conclusion, the conditions for researching my development in terms of a move from teacher to teacher trainer were established. There were research questions, data sources, participants and data collection instruments. As has emerged from this section data collection and analysis is a cyclical process, and the researcher constantly returns to the same data, but often brings or gains new insights. The findings and implications of the data analysis will now be discussed.

5 Findings

The data presented here were collected between the spring semester of 2005 and the spring semester of 2008 inclusive. The survey data and the feedback forms lay two addditional layers atop that of the diary writing.

The diary data is made up of entries and subsequent comments upon these entries. As far as was possible the survey data comprise the students' own comments so as to reflect their originality. Where changes have been made these are solely for the purpose of aiding reader comprehension. Salient coments are cited on their own. Feedback data is integrated to support, or repudiate, the diary and/or survey data as appropriate. Data are not necessarily given chronologically for each of the Research Questions. This is to facilitate overall comprehension in adressing the research questions rather than present a historical overview or show the development of the study. Anonymity of trainee participants is maintained throughout

Based on the research conducted in this study using data from a teaching diary, classroom surveys and end-of-semester feedback the following points can be made to aid the transition from teacher to teacher trainer:

Research Question 1: How should the teacher trainer share their own teaching experience and expertise in the delivery of a methodology course?

- Have the courage of your convictions; it is essential for your new role as you are the experienced expert to whom your trainees look for help and advice. However, wherever possible the help and advice should come primarily from the group rather than from the trainer. Wright and Bolitho (2007) maintain '[w]e do have a contribution to make – but we try to keep it focused, and derived from a group's explorations and contributions' (p. 123).
- Think very carefully before making any comments, particularly if they could be misconstrued as judgemental or ill-considered. Such remarks can have a detrimental long-term effect on the class. If you wish to be critical, weigh up your arguments before speaking.
- Admit to and learn from your mistakes; accept that there will always be mistakes, but see these as an inevitable and essential part of the learning process for both the participants and you.
- Having the the courage of your convictions means that you can be proactive and intervene when you feel the need. As above, trainees expect it and they cannot learn everything merely by doing it: at certain times they need direction and leadership from you .

Research Question 2: Trainees on methodology courses often comment that they have no teaching experience. What does having 'no teaching experience' mean?

- Trainees are generally aware of their own lack of experience, or not as the case may be. However, they are undecided as to what constitutes experience. While some consider full group classroom teaching as the only possibility, others see occasional one-to-one teaching as sufficient.
- Encourage trainees to consider gaining a wide variety of teaching experience because surprisingly one-to-one teaching, the default teaching mode for many, is frequently accorded low status.

- Similarly encourage participants to peer teach whenever possible. Unfortunately, peer teaching, the mainstay of much teacher training classroom practice, is also not wholly welcomed by many trainee teachers.
- Trainees need to be proactive in finding teaching opportunities for themselves and should make use of all possibilities that come along to gain a maximum of teaching experience.

Research Question 3: What is a teaching professional?

- Trainees generally have sufficient experience to discern professionalism in a teacher. Despite derisory remarks concerning the non-existence of the teaching professional, participants acknowledge what a good teacher is, just as much as they claim to recognise a bad one.
- If we strive to help our trainees overcome the difficulties inherent in learning to teach we should see our role as Wright and Bolitho do, namely 'in terms of supporting and facilitating the process of awareness raising, reflecting and making meaning which we believe are the key stages in professional learning' (p.226).
- Trainees are also very much aware of what can contribute to a positive classroom atmosphere and how group dynamics and motivation are key factors in creating this atmosphere.
- After having spent many years in classrooms trainees are very much aware of what is expected of them, particularly in terms of knowledge and behaviours. They also realise that the classroom is a particular place all of its own with rules and norms and they should act accordingly.

Research Question 4: How can the course materials, in particular the readings, best be exploited for maximum comprehension and usefulness?

- Trainees generally do not appreciate heavily theoretical readings, the preference is for texts with an immediate practical application. Trainers need to reconsider the type of reading and where possible provide readings which integrate the theoretical with examples of its application.
- The data suggests that trainees prefer group plenary and cooperative tasks to reading alone before classes; nevertheless, this very approach is advocated by many others. Trainees should therefore offer both approaches at different times during their courses and thereby demonstrate various reading and presentation techniques as a consequence.
- In spite of trainees' avowed dislike of the readings, there is evidence that readings do have an effect, the very suggestions for improvimg the readings themselves being a case in point.
- Trainers need to reconsider there approach to the readings given that the trainees are no longer a predominantly book-based group. Wright and Bolitho observe that trainees 'who may have lost the reading habit are often overawed by long reading lists and may not know where to start, and how to extract what they need from reading materials. We see it as our responsibility to help them through guidance and tasks' (p.129). This rings true for the research discussed here and clearly is worthy of further consideration.

- As a result of the previous finding, trainers, and their institutions likewise, should consider using alternatives formats to paper-based materials given the everyday experience of the trainees with information technology.
- Trainers and their institutions should also carefully consider the type of readings offered. Wright and Bolitho 'see reading in much the same light as input from the trainer. Judiciously selected books and articles can help enormously in the process of making sense of previous experience… and of creating new meanings for ourselves as we consider the implications of new professional ideas for our future practice' (p.129). However, it is the judicious selection of materials for reading that is significant here and, again, worthy of further investigation.

6 Conclusion

These then are the findings from a case study approach to teacher development. As a case study there is not the possibility to use its findings to make generalisations, neither is it considered to be an objective depiction of the phenomena examined. The beauty of a case study is that it is read and the reader takes from it for their own use, or leaves it, however they see fit. Similarly, the analysis of the data is closely bound up with the researcher, and as pointed out in the dissertation the way data is seen changes over time. Another practioner seeing this data would draw different conclusions; it is in the nature of such a study that it is open to interpretation. When we interpret we make use of many things: Malderez and Wedell (2007) recommend, that ' we pay attention to and value those flashes of insight that may occur at any time' (p.134).

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